

NOAA, 2017 was the most expensive year on record for disasters in the United States. At some point, we have to acknowledge that the intensity of these storms is much greater than in past years and is a symptom of changing climate.

Climate change is real. It is being driven by human activity. It is happening right now. These are facts. They are not in dispute. Our scientists know it, our businesses know it, the world knows it, and the American people know it. But too many Senators on the other side of the aisle just put their heads in the sand. It costs us more and more and more. We are not going to leave these people high and dry, but if we would do more on climate change, we would have fewer of these hurricanes and other types of storms.

Everyone knows that, except a few. Why? Why don't they admit the truth? Maybe there are two words that explain it: oil industry.

Just this week the U.N. released a report on climate change, saying that the world has only a short time—maybe a little more than a decade—to get a handle on carbon emissions. So far, the current administration has done nothing but move the issue backward. It is amazing that we, the leading country that is supposed to be the moral force—the economic, political, and military leader—are the ones who pull out of the Paris climate accords, and then the administration has been repealing environmental protection after protection.

So while we are thinking about the people of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina and everyone in Hurricane Michael's path, let's remember we are running out of time to do something about climate change. The kinds of storms we are seeing now will only increase if this body continues to keep its head in the sand ostrichlike and ignore the scientific realities.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, on another matter—healthcare—yesterday, 50 of my Republican colleagues voted against ensuring protections for people with preexisting conditions—people with asthma and cancer, people with diabetes and all kinds of gynecological problems. Republican Senators sided with the Trump administration to expand the ability of insurance companies to sell cutrate, junk insurance to Americans—to dupe Americans. These plans will destabilize the healthcare market and raise the cost of insurance for people with preexisting conditions who may end up being priced out of insurance altogether.

Let me say that again. Republicans yesterday voted to let insurance companies offer junk insurance plans that don't cover essential health benefits, allowing them to nickel-and-dime patients out of the medical care they deserve.

Our constituents—Democrats, Republicans, north, west, east, and south—say they want better healthcare at a lower cost, and what do Republicans do? They offer worse healthcare coverage at a higher cost, ultimately, to people, because the plans don't cover anything and then you have to pay out of your pocket.

What did they do it in the name of? Freedom. Freedom. This is like the 1890s. Who is going to have freedom? The insurance companies, the big shots. Who is going to have no freedom from illness and disease? Average folks. It is terrible thinking, once again siding with big, powerful special interests, not the average person.

The only people who want these junk insurance plans are two groups—the insurance companies and the rightwing ideologues who believe the government shouldn't be in healthcare at all. They want to cut Medicare. They want to cut Medicaid. They want to cut Social Security. That is who it is.

So let us remember that the junk insurance plans are hardly worth the paper they are printed on. They lure consumers in with low premiums, but the deductibles are so high, the copays are so high, and the coverage so skimpy that the plans hardly offer any benefit to the consumer at all.

While every Republican save one voted to hand the keys to the insurance companies, every single Democrat—every single Democrat—stood up to the sabotage from the Trump administration and voted to not allow the expansion of junk insurance across America.

I warn my colleagues that these are the kinds of issues that voters remember come election time. Healthcare is the No. 1 issue in America to the broad majority of voters. The American people will head to the polls in November and ask themselves: Which party will defend the people's right to quality healthcare? Which party will not?

The answer to that question could not be clearer. Democrats have spent the past 2 years offering several plans to reduce the cost of healthcare while maintaining or increasing the quality, while President Trump and Republicans in Congress have done nothing but drive costs up and quality down in obeisance to the big special interests—the insurance industry.

They have tried to repeal the healthcare law. They have tried to gut Medicaid, eliminate healthcare for millions of Americans, and put the insurers back in charge. They have eliminated the program to help low- and middle-income Americans afford insurance and, worst of all, Republican attorneys general—including two running for the Senate, one in Missouri and one in West Virginia—are suing, as we speak, to eliminate protections for Americans with preexisting conditions.

These actions are undergirded by a belief on the other side of the aisle that the American people just don't deserve help affording adequate healthcare. Re-

publicans have believed, continue to believe, and have acted on, unfortunately, that insurance companies should rule the roost, just as in the 1890s. The consequences are severe.

As a result of the Republican healthcare agenda, premiums are up by double digits in several States and quality is down. As a result of the Republican healthcare agenda, Americans are paying more and getting less.

I say to the American people that in a few short weeks you will have a choice. You can vote for 2 more years of healthcare sabotage from a Republican Congress, more attempts at repealing the healthcare law, more premium increases and uncertainty, more actions that undermine protections for patients with preexisting conditions or the American people can vote to flip the script and support Democratic candidates who will not only protect the care that Americans have today but who will work every single day to make it better.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey Bossert Clark, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

FAA/CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I think by any standard, as we conclude this Congress, the House and Senate, working together, have put more legislation on the President's desk that has long-term impact than at any time in a long time, whether it was the opioid legislation or healthcare research funding.

I want to talk a little bit today about the Federal Aviation Administration extension that, just last week, the Senate passed and the President signed. I believe the 5-year reauthorization is the longest reauthorization since the 1980s. So the traveling public, the FAA itself, the Department of Transportation, and the airline carriers of both people and freight have an understanding of what the next 5 years should look like.